

Growth of the Divorce Evil

BY FREDERIC J. HASKIN.

On account of the general alarm over the growth of the divorce evil in this country, the national government is collecting statistics from the various States with a view to throwing light on the subject and encouraging remedial legislation. It is estimated that there have been 500,000 divorces in the United States in the last twenty years, and that 1,500,000 children have seen their homes broken up. The full extent of the evil can hardly be realized until the forthcoming report is completed, because only nine States now publish divorce statistics. These are Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan.

So many absurd excuses for divorce have been found that it is no wonder the comic papers and the subject one that yields much rich material for their purposes. A South Dakota woman was recently given a divorce from her husband because he refused to pay for a pair of corsets she had bought. One wife secured a separation from her husband because he persisted in stoning their neighbors' cats, thus making her unpopular in the community where they lived. Another woman who married a carpenter, afterward, released, and begged to be released from the union on account of the fear that if she ever had children they would inherit a tendency to pound and make a noise. Mrs. James Alexander, of New York, carried off the honors as a most unique divorcee by issuing cards that read: "Mrs. James Alexander requests the honor of your presence at the celebration of her divorce from Mr. James Alexander." However, it remained for Blumenschein to give the handsome thing by his dissatisfied wife. When he found she was in love with another man he helped her secure her release from himself, settled the house and a fine income on her, then crowned his generosity by giving her away at the wedding.

As a rule the States have adopted the philosophical view that it is wiser not to interfere with marriage relations that are not pleasant, and so have been reluctant to enact divorce laws. Those that have been enacted vary so much in what is considered justification, length of legal residence required, and in terms of settlement, that their utter lack of general application is conceded to be a menace rather than a protection to our civilization. They range all the way from South Carolina, with no divorce law at all, to Tennessee's willingness to grant a divorce on any of twelve reasons after one year's residence in the State. The length of residence required before a divorce can be obtained ranges from six months in South Dakota, Idaho, Nebraska, Nevada, and Texas, to five years in Massachusetts. The cause range from very grave crimes down to mere trivialities.

New York grants a divorce only for adultery, and in fifty out of fifty-one States and Territories this is recognized as just ground for issuing a decree. In twenty-four out of fifty-one States and Territories willful neglect to provide, in forty habitual drunkenness, and in forty-three desertion or abandonment is considered sufficient cause for legal separation. In forty-three States cruelty is accepted as grounds for divorce, but the word is widely interpreted. It runs the whole gamut from physical force to "outrageous temper." In thirty-nine States drunkenness is accepted as grounds for absolute divorce. In Georgia if both husband and wife drink neither can obtain a decree. In Nevada divorce for drunkenness is granted only when it is proved that the man cannot support his family, while in Kentucky evidence must also be provided to show that the drunken husband is "wasting his estate."

The present variation of the marriage laws throughout the States is said to be largely responsible for the prevailing muddle in divorces. Only eleven State constitutions treat the subject of marriage at all. An old statute of Pennsylvania requires twelve witnesses to a marriage. Some States require three witnesses, some two, some one, and some none at all. In New York practically no ceremony is required. A man gave a woman a ring, saying: "This is your wedding ring," and the courts held it to be a valid marriage. In South Carolina a person convicted of bigamy is disqualified from being registered, or from voting. In Utah "polygamous, or plural, marriages are forever prohibited." The constitution of California states that "no contract for marriage, if otherwise duly made, shall be invalidated for want of conformity to any religious sect." Wide latitude is allowed in the various States in the choice of the celebrant of the marriage. He may be any qualified civil officer, or any minister of the gospel; and in Arkansas, under special provision, the governor himself may officiate.

Some States are stern in their decision as to whom one may marry. Marriage between whites and persons of negro descent is prohibited in twenty-six States. Marriage between whites and Indians is prohibited in four States, and between whites and Chinese in five States. In Virginia a provision of old English common law is still in force, which prohibits a man from marrying his deceased wife's sister, though other States have laws permitting a woman to marry any and all of her brothers-in-law who may be willing, provided, of course, she marries them one at a time. Connecticut forbids feeble-minded women to marry. New Jersey decides that as the deaf and dumb do not come under the head of imbeciles, they may marry within her borders. The law-makers of Vermont have gravely ruled that a man may marry his mother-in-law if he likes. In some States a man is prohibited from marrying his son's wife, and a woman from marrying her daughter's husband. Ohio forbids the marriage of a drunkard, and will refuse to grant a license to a man who is drunk at the time he asks for it.

The laws of the States also differ widely as to the remarriage of divorced people. In twenty-six States the divorced ones may remarry when, where, how, and whom they please, without any qualifications whatsoever. In Massachusetts the defendant may be married within two years by petitioning the court and securing its permission. In Maine the guilty party can never be married without the consent of the court. In Virginia the court may forbid the defendant to marry any one but the plaintiff. In Louisiana a second marriage without divorce is valid if either party has been absent for ten years, and is not known by the other party to be living. This absence and silence is considered sufficient to dissolve the first marriage. In Mississippi when a

wife secures a divorce her husband is considered dead, and she is counted as a widow. In Tennessee a wife suing for divorce loses right of dower, and can under no circumstances claim alimony.

The news that Consuelo, Duchess of Marlborough, has just signed a deed of separation from her titled husband, calls attention to the fact that this American girl belongs to a much-married and much-divorced family. Her father is William K. Vanderbilt, and her mother is Mrs. O. H. Belmont. Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt, present wife of her father, started out in life as Miss Ann Harriman, became Mrs. Sands, then Mrs. Rutherford, then Mrs. Vanderbilt. Divorce courts have so muddled the relationships in this family that it is quite confusing to the inquirer to find out "who's who."

While there are four other States in the Union where the term of residence necessary to secure a divorce is just as short as in South Dakota, the last named State has the most accommodating courts of any, and the business of granting white-wash decrees of separation and dissolving married people has developed into a sort of home-grown industry. It has been charged that the only stipulation necessary to get a divorce in South Dakota is the payment of six months' board at one of the numerous hotels there. The most recent instance of the "hurry-up" way of

DAN'S BUSINESS COURSE

BY JAMES BRUCE.

"But that was downright dishonest," said Dan.

"It was businesslike," corrected Phillips. "Mason should not have announced his plans. He bragged about them, and if Bray jumped in and got ahead of him, it simply shows Bray's superior business ability."

"That is why you prefer Bray as a son-in-law?" queried Dan. "You want Mabel to marry a business manager, as it were?"

"That is rather a blunt way of putting it," said Phillips, uneasily. "It would be better to say that Bray's business qualifications are a point strongly in his favor."

"While my lack of them is to my discredit?"

"You do not have the knack of seizing your opportunities," said Phillips. "Now, take my case. I know that the Sneller and Exploration Company purpose getting concessions in Barona. I am going to take a run down there and get the railroad franchise through Camar. Camar is on the coast and they will have to pay me handsomely for what will cost me practically nothing. That is business. You might enlarge your fund of geographical information, but it would never occur to you to profit by what you learn."

"There's hope yet," said Dan, lightly, as he rose. "Meanwhile I am to understand that your consent to my marriage with Mabel is refused?"

"I wouldn't," corrected Phillips. He never gave a definite answer when he could help it. "Perhaps—in the future—"

Dan nodded. Perhaps in the future his uncle might make him his heir.

John Phillips turned to his desk with the consciousness of an unpleasant episode cleverly closed. It was not until the next morning that his eyes were opened. Mabel and Dan ran away. "I have gone with Dan," she wrote. "I want a husband, not a valuable addition to the firm of Phillips & Kent."

Phillips shrugged his shoulders and went his way. Deep in his heart he desisted hurt, but with several big operations pending he could not afford to waste time. He shut his ears to the talk of his associates, but as the days went on and Dan and Mabel did not appear to ask for forgiveness, his anxiety grew. He had supposed that when the honeymoon was over they would come back. He was almost tempted to delay his trip to Camar.

But there was no one else in the firm who spoke Spanish well enough to be trusted with the negotiations, and so the Mabel, his luxuriously appointed yacht, slipped down the bay and in due course anchored in the land-locked harbor of Porveda.

It took him two days to gain an audience with the president of the tiny republic, for there had just been a revolution and matters were slow in straightening out. Alvorada, the new president, spoke English haltingly, but English he would speak, and Phillips, tactful but impatient, chafed inwardly at the delay. He spoke Spanish fluently and in ten minutes he could have approached the subject had the president held to his native tongue, but this was precisely what the president would not do.

"I speak the English, is it not?" he cried. "Bonito, not one word could he speak—he who would be president. It is to chicle—what is it?"

"Another language makes another man," quoted Phillips from an advertisement card he had seen in the street cars. "I compliment your excellency."

"My thanks," said Alvorada. "You are my friend—is it not so?"

"But about this concession," pressed Phillips. "Of course, a railroad would not pay very much, but we are looking into the future when the road shall have made Camar great."

"Ah, yes, the railway," said Alvorada, dreamily. "For him, you shall see my business manager."

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"My friend," decided the president, "let us not argue. See my business manager in the morning. Look, I shall send him to you, yes?"

"Thank you," said Phillips. "But meanwhile let me show you the advantage of such a proposition."

Alvorada waved him off. Business matters were for the business manager. He was the president. It was not well that he should interfere.

Phillips went away thoroughly disgusted, and his bad temper held the next morning as he waited at the hotel for the advent of this mysterious official, nor did his wrath cool when a card was brought to him and he read:

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"How in the devil did you get here?" demanded Phillips blankly.

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doing things in the northwestern State was the divorce lately granted to Mrs. James G. Blaine, Jr. This lady was in a hurry to get to her home in Washington for Christmas, so the judge held a night session of the court while a special train was kept waiting. Before her marriage to Mr. Blaine she was the beautiful Martha Hichborn, whom the society reporters called "Martha in Lavender." Now she is neither Miss Hichborn nor Mrs. Blaine, but Mrs. Pearsall, having promptly married again.

But the merry habit of exchanging wives and freeing oneself from the matrimonial net is not confined to the Four Hundred. Factories are filled with divorced women, who think they would rather work for themselves than to stay unhappily married. In the South the negroes flock to the divorce courts and are granted separation by the scores at every court. This phase of the problem has been "worked up" by the enterprising negro lawyers.

There is another kind of divorce in America which is more cruel and far more bitter in its injustice than a civil quarrel in the Newport set could be. It is when a man who married a poor working girl when he was young and poor, grows rich and great, and then decides to cast off the little wife who helped him along the road to success. The case of a Pittsburgh multimillionaire is one in point. He married the cook in his father's house when all were on a basis of perfect equality. After twenty-two years he is a man of the world and a master of affairs. Now he divorces the faithful woman who helped him by the foundation of his fortune, because she does not have the smart ways to satisfy the fastidious tastes that have come to him with his prosperity.

To-morrow—"Americans Are Book Lovers."

The episode of Caesar's life Mr. Shaw has worked into his play is his conquest of Egypt after the defeat of his competitors for control of the Roman world—an episode that only Caesar's own marvelous resourcefulness saved from proving his undoing.

When Cleopatra is a girl of sixteen, and the drama presents in a series of admirably constructed scenes at once the means by which the conqueror averts the disaster that threatened him and his small army, and those by which he turned the puppet child-queen into a woman and real queen, in feeling if not in power.

Caesar is first presented in a scene that may be based on history, but that has so much of the play's whimsicality about it that no one can be surprised that the audience wonders if it isn't witnessing a burlesque. It is a scene in the desert near the Syrian border, with a sphinx to which the girl-queen at the approach of the terrible Romans has secretly fled from her castle to sacrifice the sacred white cat as an offering to the gods for protection.

Here Caesar finds her at night curled up between the claws of the statue, which the dramatist makes Caesar take for the great Sphinx, and address in a speech of fifty personal compliments to her. Then follows a scene in which the most delicious satire mingles with the childishness of the little queen. Caesar takes her under his protection and conducts her back to her palace, which is a delightful little thing when the queen finds it is the terrible Roman conqueror who has been her escort and who places the crown on her head.

Shaw takes the view of Caesar's character taken by Froude in his fine sketch of the conqueror's life. He makes him a kind and merciful, remorseful for the slaughter of his countrymen, and the necessities of his ambition have forced him to commit; yet still facing, with sad resignation, the duty which imposes on him as a Roman master of the world. The perfect close with the departure of Caesar for Rome, as he is about to embark he delivers a speech that has in it almost the ring of a conqueror's last words.

The role of Caesar is one admirably suited to Mr. Robertson, and he plays it with an altogether admirable effectiveness. He is almost ideal in the part, and his work last night was received with momentary evidences of delight by the large and distinguished audience. He and Miss Elliott and the leading members of the company were called before the curtain again and again after each act and showered with the most sincere applause.

Miss Elliott, as the girlish but cruel and capricious Cleopatra, already in love with Marc Antony, was a revelation of finished and intelligent and charming acting. Her work is finely shaded. She grows almost visibly into the shaping hand of Caesar into a self-willed and crafty woman, the woman whose beauty and wickedness have filled the hearts of men with their evil fate. There is no member of the supporting company who fails to fill with intelligence and dramatic competence with part assigned them. The play moved with swiftness and ease, and the force to the denouement. The dramatic construction is masterful. The setting is as beautiful and adequate as any seen on the local stage in many seasons.

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OPENING NIGHT AT THEATERS

Forbes Robertson a Great Success in Shaw's "Caesar and Cleopatra."

Mr. Forbes Robertson, assisted by Miss Gertrude Elliott and a very capable company of English players, resappeared in Washington at the National Theater last night in one of the most remarkable and masterful works produced by the brilliant pen of that master of satire and dramatic construction, George Bernard Shaw. "Caesar and Cleopatra," as a whole, no doubt, has proved, and will prove, a puzzle to perhaps a majority of those who see it. But even those who are most perplexed by its daring satirical handling of the episode in Caesar's life with which it deals, and the almost indefensible but delightful anachronisms which Mr. Shaw has been deliberately guilty in his irresistible triching to score the conventionalities and hypocrisies of his own time and society, cannot fail to enjoy deeply the rarely fine and lofty historical drama he has evolved.

It may be said he has taken liberties with Caesar. But it is only with the Caesar of his predecessors of the stage, the imposing, often stilted, half-human and half-god creation that has strutted and grandeur through previous tragedies. He develops that Caesar who is entirely human, but none the less a lofty and imposing figure. He shows us the great soldier and statesman at work, and who can play, or pretend to play, as he works. It is an intimate picture of the conqueror dealing with the soldier and statesman deals with the human nature he must bend to his purposes and the purposes of his country; a Caesar, sublime in his lofty but crafty practicalness, with human passions and human weaknesses stealing through his armor of philosophy, sweetening his glory-world with softening and humanizing and bringing him near to us through the mist and dust of the centuries.

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act deals mainly with Glensier's vain delusion of McNamara and his gang, who have control of the Midas mine, and showing the further ascendancy of Glensier's power over Glensier. In the dance hall scene of the third act, Glensier loses his money and half the Midas at the faro table, but discovers that he has been cheated, and in this act one of the best handled mob scenes in the play is shown. In the hands of a less capable company the play would amount to little more than highly colored melodrama, but the redemption of the threadbare theatrical subtleties by clever acting and crisp, brilliant presence naturally made the performance a success. The story, as Glensier, gave a well-balanced performance, and by commendable discretion held it from being too heroic for plausibility. Campbell Gollan gave a splendid characterization of McNamara, and George Osborne, as Dextery, kept the audience amused all the time he was on the stage, by his delivery of the sparkling lines which fall to the character. Arthur Hoops was a good Brocho Kid, and Axel into two scenes, the first at the road house, where Struve's plot against Helen is frustrated, and the last at the Midas mine, where the last stand is successfully made for the possession of the property. In the hands of a less capable company the play would amount to little more than highly colored melodrama, but the redemption of the threadbare theatrical subtleties by clever acting and crisp, brilliant presence naturally made the performance a success. The story, as Glensier, gave a well-balanced performance, and by commendable discretion held it from being too heroic for plausibility. 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